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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
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WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: Syria/Spain, Syria/Indonesia, German Aid to Iraqi
Refugees, Somalia, Bush's Iraq Strategy, Lebanon (1/10)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Jan. 10 reported Vice President Farouq al-Shara's meeting with Mr. Miguel Lawrence, First Assistant Secretary of the Spanish Socialist Party of Catalonia, who

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emphasized Syria's right to restoration of the Golan and condemned the current policies based on siege, isolation and non-dialogue, which cannot lead to any solutions for problems of the region. Mr. Shara emphasized Syria's commitment to return of the occupied Golan in accordance with international resolutions. He hailed the role played by Spain to push the peace process forward in the region. Both sides discussed the faltering peace process and the importance of activating efforts to revive it. In a statement to SANA, the Spanish official said "We denounced any attempt to isolate Syria, because her role is active and basic to realization of a just and comprehensive peace, and we clarified the mistake committed by the US in occupying Iraq."

Papers reported that Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono received a letter from Syrian president Asad on the situation in the Middle East and the latest developments in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, as well as the growing relations between the two countries and the importance of enhancing them. The letter was handed to President Yudhoyono by Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Faisal al-Miqdad in a meeting in Jakarta on Jan. 9. President Yudhoyono stressed his country's support of Syria's legitimate demand for restoration of the occupied Golan. He also emphasized the importance of Syria's pivotal role in the region under the leadership of President Asad.

Papers also reported that the German Government donated 500,000 Euros to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to support aid programs for Iraqis living in Syria and Jordan. A statement issued by UNHCR said that the aid will be spent on Iraqis who departed their country since the war on Iraq in 2003 and live in Syria and Jordan.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"Vice-President Shara, Foreign Minister Mouallem and Speaker of the

People's Assembly Al-Abarash discuss the Middle East peace process and bilateral relations with the Spanish Socialist Party delegation" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/10)

"President Asad sends a letter to Indonesian President Yudhoyono on latest regional developments. Indonesian President underlines his country's support of Syria's positions and its right to restoration of the occupied Syrian Golan" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/10)

"German aid to Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/10)

"President Bush announces today the dispatch of additional troops to Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/10)

"Washington slides again into the Somali quagmire. Bloody US assaults against northern Somalia. US [aircraft carrier] Eisenhower ready for military intervention" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 1/10)

"Lebanese reject the Paris 3 conference. Workers' General Union's strike enhances the popular sit-in" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/10)

"Malaysia rejects US sanctions on one of its companies after allegations that it sold weapons" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 1/10)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"The Fireball"

Ali Qasim, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote

(1/10): "The instigative and rigid voices in the Palestinian arena went too far in their reactions and threats.... Many people were shocked when they heard these instigators making threats, and they hoped the threats were made against the Israeli occupation, not against this Palestinian party or that, because the problem was and will always remain the occupation, which is engaged in a daily aggression against the Palestinian people...."

"Intra-Palestinian differences allowed Israel to continue its aggression and evade all its obligations. Attention has shifted from the Israeli occupation and its hostile practices to the Palestinian differences and their dimensions and possibilities, as if the victory of this Palestinian party or that would solve the problem...."

"Israel is playing the role of direct and indirect inciter and detonator through a series of positions, practices, and hints. When its incitements fail, or its political options go bankrupt, it turns to aggression. When the aggression fails, it applies pressure through the positions of some international parties. It throws the fireball in all directions because every loss on the Palestinian side, by any party, is a gain for it...."

"The Red Line"

Ghazi al-Dada, a columnist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (1/10): "Israel is the only winner from a Palestinian civil war.... Palestinian infighting results from foreign causes, not from political differences among Palestinian factions...."

"The current Palestinian crisis, which is still swinging between signs of breakthrough and signs of escalation, is a result of purely Israeli and American causes, essentially the unjust siege that has been imposed on the Palestinian people since HAMAS's victory in the legislative elections...."

"Israel, in cooperation with the American partner, is up to its ears in the intra-Palestinian dispute.... Ending the occupation must be

the main concern for every Palestinian.... Palestinians' main battle is against Israel.... Their battle is not against each other, no matter what the reasons for their differences. We therefore hope that Palestinians will overcome their current crisis without losses, as they have overcome previous crises, so that they will not render free services to Israel -- something they definitely do not want to do...."

"Change in Course, or Method?"

Umar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (1/10): "We do not expect President Bush's new strategy to solve the problems that his administration has created in the region.... Indications are that President Bush will not adopt the Baker-Hamilton Committee recommendations to address the various issues of the region, such as Middle East peace, withdrawal from Iraq, and the end of the occupation. Rather, he plans to send more troops to Iraq. As for the other issues of the region, President Bush's strategy is not likely to change the policy of interference in Lebanon and support for Israel's terrorism...."

"The problem is that the Bush administration does not want to listen to others or heed the advice of Americans who have visited the region and seen its problems firsthand or the American citizens who have became tired of Bush's repeated promises of victory...."

"After a policy that was full of mistakes and that proved useless on all levels, President Bush's new strategy is supposed to be one of reconciliation with the world, particularly the Middle East, but this does not appear to be the case...."

"Catastrophic Clues"

Sa'id Musallam, a political analyst in government-owned Al-Thawra, said (1/10): "Most analyses note the serious dimensions of the new appointments in American political and military posts, especially as related to Iraq...."

"We do not know what other changes and strategies the US Administrating has in store. The talk about sending 30,000 more troops to Iraq is now very common. The policy of recklessness continues. The team of hawks is not turning any attention to the proposals and recommendations that called for pursuing a policy of correction and dialogue. The best optimists expect major follies, bringing disasters and tragedies upon many parts of the world, especially our region...."

"Liberating Iraq Depends on Iraqi People's Unity"

Ibrahim Zu'ayr, a political analyst in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (1/10): "The United States executed Saddam Hussein to deepen the sectarian sedition and escalate the internecine fighting between the Shiite and Sunni brothers...."

"Every nationalist in Iraq must fight for the independence of Iraq and for expelling US invaders from their country. This requires national unity and awareness that colonialists always work to ignite civil wars, as this serves their interests and enables them to rule...."

"To save Iraq, the Iraqi people must be united and all guns must be directed toward their American enemies and their supporters. The future and destiny of the Iraqi people are linked to the achievement of this great objective because it is the only thing that guarantees Iraq's freedom and independence."

Corbin